



# FAST FACTS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF

## Mental Health

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## SUICIDE FACTS & FIGURES

### Prevention Works

As many as 90% of individuals who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental illness or substance abuse disorder at the time of their deaths. These deaths are preventable and there are multiple resources available to individuals at risk of suicide, including hotlines and treatment services.

- Lives can be saved when individuals who are at risk of suicide or those who come into contact with them recognize the warning signs and know how to find help.
- Up to 75% of older adults who died by suicide visited their primary care physician within one month of their deaths.<sup>i</sup> Recognition of the signs of depression and suicide risk among older adults and how to intervene can save lives.
- Effective communication and collaboration between service systems, such as health care and mental health, can ensure people who need help can find it.
- In California, anyone can call 1-800-273-TALK 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and receive nationally accredited suicide prevention services.
- Multiple evidence-based programs exist that target high risk populations, such as older adults, Native Americans, veterans, and adolescents and youth.

### Protective Factors from Suicide

- Effective and coordinated care for mental, physical, and substance abuse problems.
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help-seeking behavior.
- Restricted access to lethal means of suicide.
- Strong connections to family and community support.
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes.
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self preservation.

### In California<sup>ii</sup>

- Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in California.
- In 2004, 3,364 Californians died by suicide, the equivalent of nine lives lost every day.
- The overall suicide rate is 9.2 per 100,000.
- Men are 3 times as likely as women to die by suicide. Women attempt suicide more often than men.
- Older adults, particularly men over the age of 75, have the highest rate of suicide (42.8 per 100,000).
- Caucasians have the highest suicide rate among racial and ethnic groups, followed by Asians, African Americans, and Latinos.

### In the Nation

- Nationally, suicide is the 8<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among adults, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among adolescents.<sup>iii</sup>
- Suicide occurs among all age groups and across all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds; disproportionately higher suicide rates occur among certain demographic groups.
- Having a previous suicide attempt significantly increases the risk of suicide.<sup>iv</sup>
- The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are up to 5,000 suicides per year among all living veterans.<sup>v</sup>
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Native young men between 15-24 years of age, at 27.99 per 100,000.
- Every year, approximately 32,000 Americans die by suicide, and over 800,000 suicide attempts are made. This is equivalent to one attempt every 39 seconds.<sup>iii</sup>
- Higher suicide rates are found among Caucasian males, adults over age 65, and American Indian and Alaskan Native men.

<sup>i</sup> National Institute of Mental Health, 2003

<sup>ii</sup> California Department of Public Health

<sup>iii</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>iv</sup> Rihmer & Kiss, 2002; Jamison, 2001

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs